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ABSTRACT

This report describes and evaluates an adult education experiment for the elderly of the Uptown Model Cities area of Chicago. The purpose of the "Senior Studies" program was to increase opportunities for adult and continuing education for the older people of the area through the development of a curriculum that encompassed art, literature, music, history, and current events. The YMCA Community College was responsible for identification of the faculty and for curriculum development, and the Division for Senior Citizens, Chicago Department of Human Resources, assumed responsibility for all administrative and mechanical aspects of program implementation. The results of this initial effort show that there is an elderly audience that is interested in quality continuing education. The need for more opportunities for continuing education is apparent from the results of this experiment. It is suggested that community agencies as well as local institutions participate in providing academic programs for the aged citizen. (DB)

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"SENIOR STUDIES"

An Adult Education Program

For The Elderly of the Chicago Uptown Area

Fall, 1970

Administered by the Division for Senior Citizens

of the Department of Human Resources

City of Chicago

Funded by the Chicago Model Cities Program

Prepared by
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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose of the Program

In the Spring of 1970, the Chicago Department of Human Resources contracted with the local Model Cities Program to administer a series of "Leisure Time" programs of recreation and education. The Department's Division for Senior Citizens developed several components of the program for the elderly. This report describes and evaluates one of these components, i.e. "Senior Studies," an adult education experiment for the elderly of the Uptown Model Cities area of Chicago.

The purpose of the "Senior Studies" program was to increase opportunities for adult and continuing education for the older people of the Uptown area through the development of a significant adult education curriculum encompassing art, literature, music, history and current events. The original proposal also included a pilot project intended to increase the Uptown area children's awareness of their historical heritage.[1]

Indirectly, the program was designed to provide the Division for Senior Citizens with insight and experience in the delivery of this type of service. Division for Senior Citizens past experience with senior center operations and

1. A variety of administrative problems made it impossible to implement this pilot project which is not discussed further in this paper.

with independent groups indicated that activities for the elderly which fall under the broad general category of adult education are often rejected by older people. At the same time many successfully established activities have to date been of such limited appeal (mostly arts/crafts classes) or mediocre quality that it can legitimately be asked whether relevant and responsive specialized programs have in fact been offered to the elderly community.

With these purposes and questions in mind, a proposal was developed, submitted to the Model Cities Program and implemented on a limited, experimental basis with a view to identifying some initial critical factors with respect to program content, faculty and consumers' acceptance.

Starting from the premise that

1) the elderly are experienced adults, whatever their formal training has been,

2) the elderly respond to quality as do other age groups,

3) the elderly have some special needs and interests, and

4) the elderly exhibit as many individual differences as other age groups,

a curriculum and a program design were developed to accommodate purpose and premises. The full text of the original proposal constitute Appendix A.

B. Summary of the Proposal

The "Senior Studies" proposal (Appendix A) was written to

meet certain specific questions and outline requirements of the Chicago Model Cities Program and as a result may not be completely clear to those unfamiliar with these requirements. For this reason a brief summary of the proposal follows.

The Division for Senior Citizens proposed to offer five nine-week courses, meeting once weekly, in the arts, literature, music, current events and history. Course content was to be developed with special concern for the limitations as well as the diversity likely to obtain in the formal educational backgrounds of potential participants.

The courses were to be offered in a multiplicity of sites, i.e. centers, groups or clubs, on group demand, to accommodate any mobility deficiency or unwillingness on the part of participants to travel to and from programs.

The program was to be staffed primarily by the Division for Senior Citizens' Adult Education Director and an Adult Education Assistant to be hired especially for the purpose of planning and coordinating program implementation. Staffing of the courses was to be supplemented by developing additional resources with the various educational resources of the community as needed.

Actually, a number of revisions of the proposal were required before the program could be put into operation

due to a number of funding delays, unexpected staff vacancies at the Division for Senior Citizens and some budget reductions and modifications occasioned by both factors.

Without altering the purpose or structure of the program, the following administrative changes had to be made:

a. With a vacancy in the Adult Education Director's position at the Division for Senior Citizens, curriculum development and faculty selection had to be assigned to an outside agency willing and able to cooperate with the Division for Senior Citizens in this effort.

   The Chicago Central YMCA Community College seemed a logical agency to select. The Community College offers similar courses for adults of the Chicago area, the "Learning for Living" series, and has the personnel and expertise to assemble a teaching staff and to develop curriculum.

b. Time limitations (official notice of funding did not reach the Division for Senior Citizens until August 3, 1970 with a program termination date of November 1)and budget reductions made it necessary to work with a small staff (5 teachers), to reduce the number of sites (4) at which program could be offered and perforce to set limits on class sizes (25 students per class for a total of 125 elderly participants).

II. <u>"Senior Studies" Program Implementation</u>

The YMCA Community College assumed responsibility for identification of faculty and for curriculum development.

Class descriptions and schedules follow:[2]

Music Magic, from Bach to the Beatles: Music Appreciation

This course would cover early composers, romantic music, opera, western and country music, instrumental music and today's rock guitar music. The course was conducted by a teacher trained at the Chicago Musical College, the American Conservatory and DePaul University.

Decorative Arts and Crafts for Men and Women

This course focused on developing a personal and creative approach to art work and art appreciation. The instructor, an established artist, was trained at the University of Illinois and the Cranbrook Academy of Art.

"What's Happening Now?" Current Events

Using Time Magazine, this course would explore and examine events as they happen and are reported in news media. The instructor, producer of the "At Random" Television Show, was trained at the University of Illinois, University of Chicago and the American Institute for Foreign Trade.

Living in Today's World: Current Trends in American History

This course would cover current problems and institutions from a historical perspective. The instructor was trained at Shaw University and Teachers' College in Columbia, Missouri.

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2. For detailed information refer to Appendix B and C.

What are Writers Writing About Today?

This course focused primarily on 20th Century authors and was to be conducted by an instructor trained at Loyola University.

Classes were to begin on September 14 for a period of nine weeks, meeting once weekly as follows:

Monday	- 1:00 P.M. - 2:30 P.M.	Music Magic
Tuesday	- 10:30 A.M.- 12 Noon	Decorative Arts
Wednesday	- 1:00 P.M. - 2:30 P.M.	What's Happening Now
Thursday	- 10:00 A.M.- 11:30 A.M.	Living in Today's World
Thursday	- 1:00 P.M. - 2:30 P.M.	What are Writers Writing About Today

Special effort was made by the YMCA Community College Administration in developing this curriculum to make it lively and relevant to older adults but especially to identify faculty members who expressed interest or enthusiasm in experimenting with teaching this older age group.

The Division for Senior Citizens assumed responsibility for all administrative and mechanical aspects of program implementation, i.e.

Selection of program sites,
Program promotion,
Recruitment of students,
Reporting to the funding agency, and
Final evaluation.

Sites Selection

Experience indicated that a great deal of care would have to be

exercised in locating program sites. Such a site had to be centrally located, so as to be readily accessible to the majority of potential participants; it had to be comfortable and suited to classroom activities (including arts/crafts) in the event the program remained in that one location, and it had to be rent-free due to budget limitations.

The Uptown Chicago Commission located at 4723 North Broadway meets several of these requirements, i.e. it was offered for use rent-free, it is located at the nub of major surface and elevated public transportation lines, and has space which could be converted to classroom use. The cooperative Uptown Commission staff, who also agreed to provide chairs and tables for the program, was interested in testing the use community groups might make of the premises. The site was therefore selected after some canvassing as the central registration site.

Unfortunately, the site fell short of the ideal because it is reached by climbing a flight of steps which a number of the elderly could not manage comfortably. Three classes continued to meet at this site. Two classes, the Literature Class and the Current Events Class moved to the Lawrence and Chelsea House Retirement Hotels respectively. These sites were selected partly because a number of interested participants found them more convenient. Both of these recently refurbished retirement hotels have excellent first floor lounging and community activity rooms which were also offered rent-free and were opened to community participants for the program.

Promotion

To facilitate recruitment of participants, promotional materials were developed by the Division for Senior Citizens Community Education unit. (Appendix D) These materials which include flyers on the program, registration forms, press releases and memos to group presidents and leaders were widely distributed to the neighborhood press, agencies serving older people, and to all identifiable groups of the older people themselves.

Recruitment

An intensive participant recruitment program was instituted during which Division for Senior Citizens staff addressed groups of elderly, described the proposed program and signed up interested participants if they wished to save a trip to the Uptown Commission for this purpose. Division for Senior Citizens staff addressed senior citizens groups, church groups, as well as retirement hotel, boarding house and public housing residents, wherever older people congregate.

Classes did not start until September 21, 1970, due to the funding delays; 65 students, a few of whom registered for more than one class, were in attendance on opening day.

III. Evaluation of the Program - Evaluation of the program was conducted by Division for Senior Citizens staff through class auditing and interviews with students and faculty. The result of these observations follows.

A. Curriculum

1. "Music Magic" was a course designed to offer the student an opportunity to learn about musical development from the classics to contemporary music. Class time was devoted to listening to selected musical tapes and to analysis of musical styles through group discussion. (For course outline refer to Appendix C.)

Staff evaluation indicates that this course was well received by participants and that a good rapport was established between instructor and students. The class however continued to remain quite small (average attendance 3.9) from the start.

Several factors which affected the limited success of this class would need to be considered in the future. First, this class continued to be offered in the Uptown Commission which was physically undesirable for many elderly persons because of the necessity to climb a steep flight of steps. Secondly, the classroom furniture made available was not the most comfortable. Finally, the small number of students in attendance probably minimized the number and versatility of ideas students could contribute. Certainly an area of research in this connection would relate to the optimal group size required to conduct such a class successfully.

2. "What are Writers Writing About Today?" was structured to cover some contemporary poetry, the poetic works of Shakespeare,

Edward Albee, Tennessee Williams, Ernest Hemingway, Archibald McLeish and others. Excerpts from these works were read and analyzed through class discussion; they were also related to the personal life experience of the participants. One older person was able to bring original poetry to the group.

This class was generally more successful than "Music Magic" for predictable reasons:

1) it was moved to the attractive, comfortable and highly suitable first floor library of the Lawrence House Retirement Hotel,

2) the average class attendance (7.8 persons) was substantially made up of Lawrence House residents so that there were no problems of accessibility.

On the other hand two negative factors were noted by Division for Senior Citizens staff during auditing periods:

1) Class materials were mimeographed and could have been more legible with large type and less material on each page (a basic requirement for any material to be used with older people many of whom have varying sight losses).

2) There is no question that older people, like younger ones, are able to deal with difficult concepts and can learn to appreciate new forms. It would seem desirable however to proceed (or to test the advantages of proceeding) more gradually from the simpler to the more complex and from the familiar to the unknown than was in fact the case in this course.

   The instructor's comments on this course however were that the older students "seemed to bring to the study of literature an ability to see the materials through perspectives not possible for younger persons." A youthful instructor herself, she remarked: "They're more honest than younger students."

3. "Living in Today's World: Trends in American History." This class focused on major trends in American contemporary life from a historical perspective, covering such topics as: Life on Farms and in Cities, American Mass Media, the United Nations, etc.

   Class discussion was used to analyze and relate reading materials to the environment and social climate of senior citizens in urban America today.

   This class was interesting in that good rapport existed between the senior citizen instructor and his elderly students. The course however was probably somewhat deficient in the selection of materials. The instructor, an experienced school teacher, chose to use the Follett Basic Learning Program in social studies, a format developed for 7th and 8th grade school children. Such basic study outlines are replete with simple minded questions and answers which may be relevant to the development of a young child (and we question this proposition) but are hardly necessary for comprehension by adults. Predictably a number of the participants expressed difficulties in sustaining interest in the material studied.

4. "What's Happening Now?" Current Events - Using Time Magazine as a textbook, this class examined current events as they occurred and were reported in the media. Group discussion and modified role playing were used as teaching

techniques. (For example, students would be asked to assume the role of editor of a major metropolitan newspaper and to decide whether and how to cover a radical political demonstration.) From this starting point, discussion was generated on radical points of view, the role of the press, etc.

One of the most successful classes, average attendance was about 16 students.

The success of this class raises several interesting questions which need further exploration.

1) the instructor, producer of the major television discussion show "At Random," is obviously expert at the palatable and lively dissemination of information. Furthermore, he has public status as a recognized and successful professional figure,

2) the role-playing technique employed in teaching coupled with the fact that we are all affected by current occurrences, created greater involvement on the part of students than in some of the other classes. Staff observations of this group indicated that group discussions were lively, individual student personalities were delineated and contributed to the interest of the course and that major news concepts were clarified and understood.

One problem experienced by the elderly of this class was the inability of some students to purchase the $0.50 copy of Time Magazine. Complimentary copies could not be obtained in spite of the instructor's request. Students, as a result, had to work together on a limited number of copies and were unable to do the advance reading which might have saved class time for more important discussions.

5. Decorative Arts - Course content focused on line design, (with string, rope, thread, etc.) molding or carving of postive and negative shapes and painting styles and techniques. All materials were provided. Class attendance averaged 8 persons.

Perhaps, predictably, the art class was one of the successful classes offered in the program. Even though this class continued to meet at the Uptown Commission with its uncomfortable flight of steps, it is probably significant that a greater number of students continued to participate. A tradition of offering arts and crafts activities to older people is well established in the field of aging at least through senior citizens centers, clubs, and other institutions.

Class success in this instance however is attributable in part to the stress placed by the instructor on individual creativity. Unlike many other classes, the art instruction was provided almost exclusively on an individual basis. Emphasis was placed on the subjective significance of art.

This instructor who teaches younger adults at the Community College described the older participants as "more creative (than younger adults), less afraid to try new ideas or new media." The enthusiasm of these participants for experimenting with new ideas, forms and substances is probably best demonstrated by the fact that motivation in this instance was sustained beyond the classroom setting.

Several students reported trying original ideas at home as a result of classroom learning. One elderly lady arranged to enroll in the instructor's regular college art courses.

Finally, it might be noted that this art course attempted to go beyond run-of-the-mill arts and crafts activities which are so often limited to the production of items of questionable esthetic merit. The class provided for some general understanding about art forms and creativity as well as for artistic expression. The combination was eminently successful if participants' approval and motivation are the measures of success.

B. Faculty

By identifying teachers who expressed interest in the elderly and/or a willingness to experiment with teaching this older age group, the Community College insured a measure of success for the project. The experience certainly demonstrated that both young and older teachers can readily establish rapport with elderly students.

What might have been helpful to the program faculty but could not be accomplished within the project time limitations, would have been an orientation or training session for the faculty by experienced practitioners in aging. Given the faculty's basic interest and subsequent enthusiasm about the experience, some errors might have been

avoided and some greater gains made. (An administrative evaluation with faculty reactions included is attached as Appendix E).

C. Practical Considerations

A certain number of factors affect all programming for the elderly. "Senior Studies" was no exception.

1) Promotion. The best program in the world is bound to go unnoticed unless potential participants are aware of its existence and availability. With older people, many of whom are isolated, promotion needs to be intensive enough to include not only publicity through the usual channels (neighborhood press, flyers, mailings, community meetings, etc.) but through special outreach efforts and personal contacts (at least with group leaders if not with the groups themselves). Special or intensive outreach is most successful when it is based on a thorough knowledge of the local elderly community, i. e. where the elderly congregate, what agencies serve them, what groups, churches, public housing buildings, etc. they frequent. This type of promotion takes time.

In implementing a program of this sort, it is essential to explore constituted senior citizen groups in the community. This would present the advantages of a site and a participation - oriented group of elderly. These groups often have similar programs which could be further developed and expanded.

In the development of the "Senior Studies" program, only 1½ - 2 weeks could be devoted to promotion because of the various funding delays discussed earlier. It is advisable to allow 5 - 6 weeks for this purpose. The interesting result of the experiment

however is that after only 2 weeks of promotion 65 older persons registered. There is no doubt whatever that given more time to inform the elderly of Uptown and to allow them to plan, the full quota of 125 students could easily have been reached.

Another factor to consider during promotional stages is cost. It is important to fully understand the resources of the participants, and not to make tuition or fees prohibitive factors in gaining participants. However, if it is possible to charge a token registration fee that all potential participants could afford, it would provide some revenue for additional materials or a social segment of the program.

2) Site,Time and Other Physical Factors

The accessibility of the site, in relation to transportation and to convenience, affects both registration and attendance. As this program demonstrated, flights of steps represent serious obstacles to some elderly as do uncomfortable chairs, small print or hard to read materials. Workers in aging used to serving the elderly would avoid these obvious mistakes.

Also to be considered in planning would be the time of day and length of classes. These decisions would vary with individual situations. However, if senior citizens must travel to the site of the classes, it would probably be wise to utilize the hours of the late morning and early afternoon, to avoid rush-hour situations and darkness in winter.

Regarding length of classes, it has been our experience that for most subjects, one and one-half hours is a suitable length,

although once again this could vary with particular subjects or participants.

D. Completion Ceremonies

The "Senior Studies" experience demonstrated that completion, or "graduation" ceremonies, can be a highlight of the senior academic program. On Friday, November 23, 1970, the Division for Senior Citizens held a ceremony at the Chelsea House Retirement Hotel to honor the senior citizens that had participated in the program. The ceremony was enthusiastically received by the elderly participants and each was presented with an individually inscribed "Certificate of Completion."

This event provided an attractive goal element for the senior students and generated a great deal of interest in the program by other elderly friends that attended.

Conclusions

However limited the success of the initial effort to improve continuing education for older people may have been, the experiment points to conclusions which have clear implications for the service system, i.e. that there is an elderly audience interested in quality continuing education and that elderly people with varied backgrounds and without formal training enjoy dealing with new complex or adult issues.

The experiment points also to the need to provide more opportunities for continuing education and for community agencies to proliferate such programs and to develop the resources required to provide them.

By and large programs for the elderly have sought funding from the Administration on Aging, the Office of Economic Opportunity and crisis oriented funding sources. It is time to assess educational and cultural resources of the community such as the City Colleges, the Board of Education, the University Extension services, the libraries and museums as well as federal financial support through the United States Adult Education Act of 1966. Local institutions should be urged to redefine their concept of adult education to include full recognition of the aged citizen who desires to participate in academic programs.

ABSTRACT OF APPENDICES

Six appendices to the text of the Senior Studies report have been prepared in order to provide more information about several areas of the "Senior Studies Program". Any or all of the following appendices are available upon request from the Division for Senior Citizens, Department of Human Resources, 640 N. LaSalle, Chicago Illinois 60610

Appendix A

A copy of the original proposal submitted to the Chicago Model Cities Program. The proposal includes detailed information on the Senior Studies Work Program including its purpose and beneficiaries, scope and content, timetable, administration and coordination, evaluation, and citizen participation.

Appendix B

The course outlines of each of the five classes offered with a biographical sketch of each instructor.

Appendix C

Examples of course materials employed by the various instructors; specifically, notes from one instructor to his class, a lesson plan, and actual work materials.

Appendix D

Examples of the promotional materials used to publicize and stir interest in the program.

Appendix E

The administrative evaluation of the work program conducted by the Central YMCA Community College. The overall evaluation was excellent. The major significance of the program lies in the fact that adult education opportunities were made available and were especially tailored for senior citizens.

Appendix F

A copy of the certificate of completion presented to program participants at the graduation ceremonies at Chelsea House.

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